



Special Olympics Florida and Ron Jon Surf Shop Embark on Second Season of Surfing Program for Special Olympics Athletes

COCOA BEACH, Fla. -- (June 21, 2011) -- What started as a trial run for a group of eight athletes from Special Olympics Florida in Cocoa Beach in 2010 has now grown to encompass the entire state, making surfing Special Olympics Florida's newest addition to its year-round sports offerings.

Last year, Ron Jon Surf Shop, through its affiliated Ron Jon Surf School, partnered with Special Olympics Florida to bring surf instruction and the culture and lifestyle of surfing to a group of its athletes.

The program quickly grew and expanded beyond Cocoa Beach to include more than 30 athletes in Jacksonville and Stuart. This year, the program will continue in the original markets and is working to expand to Fort Lauderdale, Daytona Beach, Panama City Beach, and beyond.

The 2011 summer surfing program for Special Olympics athletes will kick off July 11 in locations around the state. The athletes work with approved surf schools under the direction of Special Olympics Florida and Craig Carroll, founder of Ron Jon Surf School, and will participate in a series of eight weekly lessons to help them hone their skills. At the end of the season, Ron Jon Surf Shop will host a statewide surfing competition where the athletes will compete in a variety of categories.

Ron Jon Surf Shop is the official sponsor of the program and is working closely with officials at Special Olympics Florida to develop a Coaches Guide, create a corresponding video and other documents needed for the program to move along the path of consideration to be included as an official sport within Special Olympics.

“Throughout this program, our athletes have once again shattered the stereotype of what people with intellectual disabilities are capable of. In each class, and within just a few weeks, they became legitimate surfers!” said Special Olympics Florida President Monty Castevens, adding “This program has great potential to benefit many, many more

Special Olympics athletes, all while giving them the skills to enjoy the sport of surfing with their friends, families, and the broader surfing community, for the rest of their lives.”

Carroll, a former professional surfer who has surfed in Cocoa Beach for more than 40 years, has operated the Ron Jon Surf School since 1993.

"We knew from the very beginning that these athletes would not only enjoy this new experience, they would thrive on the waves and truly learn how to surf," said Carroll. "I am personally thrilled to see the growth of this sport within the Special Olympics organization and am excited about its potential. Seeing the excitement in the athletes' eyes and watching their confidence grow was inspiring to all who participated in the program."

About Special Olympics Florida

Special Olympics Florida provides year-round sports training and competition to children and adults with intellectual disabilities, at no cost to the athlete or their caregiver, as a means to achieve physical fitness, self-esteem, socialization skills, and the life skills necessary to be a productive, respected and contributing members of their communities. To learn more, visit www.specialolympicsflorida.org.

About Ron Jon Surf Shop

Ron Jon Surf Shop was founded in 1959 by surfing enthusiast Ron DiMenna. Two years later, he opened a tiny oceanside shop in Long Beach Island, N.J. The lifestyle-apparel and board-sports-equipment retailer has since opened stores in Cocoa Beach, Ft. Lauderdale, Orlando, Ft. Myers, Key West, Panama City Beach, Fla., as well as Myrtle Beach, S.C. The flagship store in Cocoa Beach is the world's largest surf shop. It operates 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. On the web: www.ronjons.com.

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